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AUTHOR Spinelli, Emily
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ABSTRACT

An important category of culture to include in second language curriculum is functional culture, defined as the elements of surface and deep culture as well as civilization that must be learned to function while traveling, living, studying, or working in a foreign culture. Elements of functional culture include acting appropriately in everyday situations, using appropriate common gestures, and performing tasks that are necessary for day-to-day living. This content is most effectively taught in combination with grammar or vocabulary rather than with the usual reading. While performing communicative exercises and activities designed to teach new vocabulary or grammatical patterns, the student can simultaneously learn to function in a given situation within the target culture. The following types of sample exercises and class activities which combine grammar or vocabulary and functional culture are outlined: the teaching of numbers in conjunction with currency or telling time; situational exercises combined with theme vocabulary relating to such topics as food, travel, geography, or shopping; grammatical structure, such as if-clauses and reading an airline schedule; comparison of adjectives and geography; and verb tenses and various cultural points. An example of a situational exercise adapted as a test item is included. (MSE)

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Increasing the Functional Culture Content of the Foreign Language Class

Emily Spinelli
University of Michigan-Dearborn

During the past several years there has been a growing awareness of the necessity of providing more information about culture within the foreign language classroom. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages has included culture as one of the five skill areas in its Proficiency Guidelines,[1] and instructors are searching for effective ways to improve the culture component of foreign language courses.

In order to strengthen the culture element of the foreign language curriculum, we must first examine two basic principles about the teaching of culture. First of all there are many types of culture, and care should be taken to teach as many types as possible. Nelson Brooks, long known for his belief in the inclusion of sociological aspects of culture in the foreign language classroom, made a distinction between the terms *culture* and *civilization*.[2] According to Brooks, culture is the study of a society, its people, institutions, folkways, and mores; civilization is the study of the history of that society and its achievements in art, architecture, music, literature, and the sciences. In the past, teaching civilization far outweighed teaching culture. Today the teaching of culture and particularly the sociological/anthropological aspects of culture are viewed as most important. In fact, "... 'cultural understanding' has become for many citizens the primary justification for the study of foreign languages."[3]

Nelson Brooks further divided the term *culture* into surface culture and deep culture.[4] Surface culture includes the overt elements of society that are evident to almost everyone even at first glance: gestures, clothing, and eating habits are elements of surface culture. Deep culture includes

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elements such as values, institutions, and mores which are not easily discernible and which are more sociological in their composition; the role of individualism or religion in society are examples of deep culture elements. Many effective techniques for the teaching of surface and deep culture have been developed in recent years. Activities such as the culture capsule,[5] the culture cluster,[6] the culture assimilator,[7] the mini-drama,[8] or the cultoon[9] teach appropriate behavior in the target culture while fostering cross-cultural awareness.

Another important category to consider is *functional culture*, a term I use to describe those elements of surface and deep culture as well as civilization which must be learned in order to function while traveling, living, studying, or working in a foreign culture. Elements of functional culture include but are not limited to acting appropriately in everyday situations, using appropriate common gestures, and performing those tasks necessary for day-to-day living such as eating, shopping, banking, and using telephones, mail service, and public transportation.[10]

In addition to the various types of cultural content we must also keep in mind that as a skill, culture is unlike listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which can be taught independently. Culture must be taught in conjunction with another skill and in textbooks it is most frequently combined with reading. While the cultural reading can convey valuable descriptive information about surface and deep culture, the activity is basically passive. On the other hand, the teaching of functional culture is most effective when combined with vocabulary or grammar rather than with reading. While performing communicative exercises and activities designed to teach new vocabulary or grammatical patterns, the student can simultaneously learn to function in a given situation within the target culture.

The teaching of numbers combines well with the teaching of functional culture, for numbers are vital to the performance of many daily tasks. The following exercise combines the teaching of telephone usage in the target culture with the teaching of numbers.

> You work as a telephone operator in Mexico City. Your classmates will call Information to find out the phone number of the following persons or places.
>
> MODEL: Jaime Pérez / 66-05-17
>
> Classmate: What is the phone number of Jaime Pérez?
>
> You, the operator: That number is 66-05-17.

1. Carolina Muñoz / 81-75-12
2. National Bank / 26-19-14
3. Federico Lado / 88-15-42
4. Xochimilco Restaurant / 37-04-61

VOCABULARY: Numbers
CULTURAL EMPHASIS: Using the telephone

Learning to use numbers in combination with foreign currency is another important functional culture task.

You are shopping for fresh fruit and produce. Ask the owners of the market stalls what are the prices of the following items. (A worksheet gives the "customer" food items and quantities; another gives the "vendor" prices per kilo.)

MODEL: one kilo grapes / 140 p.
You, the client: How much does a kilo of grapes cost?
Classmate-salesperson: One hundred forty pesetas a kilo.

1. 1/2 kilo apples / 1.30 DM
2. 300 g. green beans / 45 p.
3. 750 g. bananas / 2.50 fr.

VOCABULARY: Numbers, foods, shopping vocabulary
CULTURAL EMPHASIS: Familiarity with foreign currency
Awareness of metric system, market system
VARIATION: Set up a similar exercise with a used car salesperson, client, and foreign cars. Exercise context: What is the price of the green Peugeot? It costs 80,000 francs.

The following exercise combines numbers and telling time vocabulary in an exercise designed for cross-cultural awareness.

Answer the following questions.

1. In Spain breakfast is eaten between 7:00 and 9:00 A.M. And in the U.S.?
2. In Spain offices, stores, and businesses open at 10:00 A.M. And in the U.S.?
3. In Spain offices, stores, and businesses close between 2:00 and 4:00 P.M. And in the U.S.?
4. In Spain offices, stores, and businesses open again from 4:00 to 8:00 P.M. And in the U.S.?
5. In Spain the main meal is eaten in the afternoon between 2:00 and 3:00 P.M. And in the U.S.?
6. In Spain the evening meal is a light meal and is eaten around 10:00 P.M. And in the U.S.?

VOCABULARY: Numbers, telling time
CULTURAL EMPHASIS: Daily schedule, meal times
EXPANSION: Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each culture's schedule. Have students write out a daily schedule for a visit in the target culture.

Situational exercises are very well suited for practicing functional tasks combined with vocabulary. In such exercises the instructor should assign students to play the various roles.

> You are a student in Bogota, Colombia. What would you say in the following situations? (Instructor should have students shake hands while greeting.)
> 1. You meet your friend Paco in the hall between classes.
> 2. You meet your neighbor Sra. López on the street as she is on her way to do the morning shopping.
> 3. You meet your instructor Srta. García at the shopping mall one Saturday afternoon.
> 4. You are taking your evening walk to the library. You meet your neighbor Sr. Fuentes.
>
> VOCABULARY: Greetings
> CULTURAL EMPHASIS: Proper greeting for time of day and person, shaking hands, touching, kissing upon greeting.

The following situational exercise is designed around food vocabulary.

> You are traveling throughout France/Germany/Spain-Latin America. What would you order in the following situations? Your instructor will assign one student as a waiter/waitress and another as the client.
> 1. You are in a café in a small French town. It is very hot and you are very thirsty.
> 2. It is 8:00 A.M. You are in your hotel dining room in Munich.
> 3. You are in Buenos Aires. You have ordered a steak and salad for dinner. What will you drink?
> 4. You are in a bar in Madrid. It is 7:30 P.M. The restaurants won't serve dinner until 10:00 P.M. but you are starving.
> 5. It is the last night of your Paris vacation. You want to splurge on a wonderful meal in an elegant restaurant.
>
> VOCABULARY: Food and drinks
> CULTURAL EMPHASIS: Meal content in the target culture, appropriate food and drink for weather, time of day and culture.

Other theme vocabulary that combines well with functional culture information includes:

1. *Dates*. Prepare a matching exercise. Include information about important national holidays, saints' days, good/bad luck days.
2. *Weather*. Exercise context: You are a travel agent and your clients want to know what the weather is like in Paris/spring, Acapulco/summer, Munich/fall.
3. *Ordinal Numbers*. Exercise context: You are directing a tour through Latin

America/Paris. As the tour director, tell your clients where they will be stopping. Your first stop is Caracas/Notre Dame. Your second stop is Bogotá/the Sainte Chapelle. Your third stop is Quito/the Louvre.

4. *Addresses* Exercise contest. You run a pen-pal club. As your classmates call you, give them the addresses of their new pen-pals.
5. *Food* Exercise contest. You are the chef. Tell your assistant what ingredients to assemble in order to prepare the following dishes: *paella/omelette/Kartoffelsalat*.

Exercises including grammatical structures and functional culture can also be devised. The following exercise combines "if" clauses with reading an airline schedule.

Look at the following airline schedule and then answer questions based on it.

DEPARTURE		ARRIVAL	
Mexico City	13:25	Guadalajara	15:05
Buenos Aires	8:50	Montevideo	10:47
Caracas	17:20	Bogotá	21:40
Lima	10:15	Santiago	12:22

1. If you were to leave Mexico City at 13:25, at what time would you arrive in Guadalajara?
2. If you were to leave Lima at 10:15, at what time would you arrive in Santiago?
3. If you had arrived in Montevideo at 10:47, at what time would you have left Buenos Aires?

VOCABULARY: Telling time
GRAMMAR: Sequence of tenses with "if" clauses
CULTURAL EMPHASIS: Familiarity with 24-hour system of telling time, familiarity with geographical place names, reading an airline schedule

The teaching of geography combines well with the teaching of comparison of adjectives.

Compare the size of the two countries as in the model.

MODEL: Mexico/El Salvador
Mexico is larger than El Salvador.

1. Chile/Honduras
2. Spain/United States
3. Colombia/Panama
4. Puerto Rico/Argentina

VOCABULARY: Geographical place names
GRAMMAR: Comparison of adjectives
CULTURAL EMPHASIS: Relative size of countries

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VARIATIONS Compare cities within one country, compare target culture cities to U.S. cities, compare target culture countries to U.S. states

The passive voice can be taught in conjunction with shopping information. Set up a matching exercise providing names of shops.

Where are the following items sold?
cigarettes/stamps/bread/pastries/shoes/fruit/
beef/cold cuts, sausages/newspapers, magazines/eggs
VOCABULARY Foods, stores and shops
GRAMMAR Passive voice
CULTURAL EMPHASIS Shopping customs

Other structural points can also be worked into exercises for functional culture.

1. *Commands* Using a map of actual target culture city, teach giving directions in conjunction with commands and prepositions of location.
2. *Future tense* Discuss a future visit to the target culture. I (we) will visit Paris. I (we) will see the Louvre. I (we) will buy perfume. I (we) will eat at Maxim's.
3. *Conditional tense* Ask or talk about daily activities in the target culture. Exercise context: In Paris/Madrid/Cologne I would get up at 7:00. I would eat a roll and drink coffee for breakfast. I would go to the university in the morning.
4. *Imperfect versus past tense* Have students prepare a one- to two-minute oral report on a real or imagined trip they took to the target culture.
5. *Subjunctive* Exercise context: You are a tour director on a trip through Mexico/France. Tell your group what you want them to see and do during their trip. I want you to visit . . . / to buy . . . / to eat . . . / to stroll . . . / to see . . .

If culture is to be an integral part of the foreign language class, then it must be evaluated as frequently and as thoroughly as we evaluate the other four skills. The situational exercise can be readily adapted and used as a test item.

Using complete French sentences, explain what you would order in the following situations. You will receive three points for a correct answer in French. You will receive an additional two points for a culturally appropriate answer and an additional one point for a particularly lengthy answer.**

1. You live in Tours. You and your wife/husband are celebrating your first wedding anniversary. You go to a lovely small restaurant for a dinner celebration.
2. You are in Paris. It is 8:00 A.M. and you go to a small café for breakfast.

3 You are spending your summer on the Cote d'Azur. You are in Nice and it is lunchtime. You go to a typical local restaurant.

As these exercises and activities that combine the teaching of vocabulary or grammatical structure with the teaching of functional culture are used, the advantages become evident.

1. Such exercises are brief. The exercises and activities such as the culture capsule, cluster, or assimilator require far more class time to implement.
2. They are easy to prepare, requiring little teacher preparation, research or realia.
3. They are practical since students learn something which will help them function within the target culture.
4. They are efficient, simultaneously teaching culture, vocabulary and/or grammar.
5. They are adaptable. Such exercises can be used to teach or test a variety of topics.

Thus, functional culture exercises are an effective way to increase or improve the culture content of the foreign language course.

Notes

1 *ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines* (Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1982.)

2 Nelson Brooks, "Culture and Civilization Differentiated," in *Essays on the Teaching of Culture*, ed. by Howard B. Altman and Victor E. Hanzeli (Detroit, MI: Advancement Press of America, Inc., 1974). Re-issued by Heinle & Heinle, 1981.

3 Genelle Morain, "Commitment to the Teaching of Foreign Cultures," *The Modern Language Journal*, 67 (Winter, 1983), pp. 403–412.

4 Nelson Brooks, "Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom," *Foreign Language Annals*, 1 (1968), pp. 204–217.

5 Darrel Taylor and John Sorenson, "The Culture Capsule," *The Modern Language Journal*, 45 (1961), pp. 350–54.

6 Betsy Meade and Genelle Morain, "The Culture Cluster," *Foreign Language Annals*, 6 (1973), pp. 31–38.

7 Fred E. Fiedler, Terence Mitchell, and Harry C. Triandis, "The Culture Assimilator: An Approach to Cross-Cultural Training," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 55 (1971), pp. 95–102.

8 Mini-dramas are culture assimilators in dialogue form. The following texts published by National Textbook of Lincolnwood, Illinois, contain many useful mini-dramas: Arley Levno, *Rencontres culturelles*, 1977; Robert K. Schira, *Kulturelle Begegnungen*, 1982; Barbara Snyder, *Encuentros culturales*, 1975.

9 Genelle Morain, "The Culture," *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 35 (1979), pp. 676–90.

10 The culture goals listed by Robert C. Lafayette in his introduction to *The Culture Revolution in Foreign Languages: A Guide for Building the Modern Curriculum* (Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co., 1975), pp. 1–2, would serve well as a list of elements of functional culture. The

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Generic Descriptions for Culture in the *ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines* (see note 1) also provide a basic list of functional culture elements.

11 For further ideas on communicative testing see Barbara Snyder, "Creative and Communicative Achievement Testing," in *Strategies for Foreign Language Teaching*, ed. by Patricia B. Westphal (Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co., 1984), pp. 34–50.

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